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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
13 August 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: US Students in Cuba

1. The 58 American university students and recent graduates who have been touring Cuba for more than a month are beginning to leave by way of air routes through Prague, [REDACTED]

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some plan to go on to Communist China while others are to return directly to the United States. Some, however, are still in Cuba. An AP news dispatch from Havana on 11 August reported that two of the students will be unable to travel for some time since they expect imminently to have babies. A total of 59 students originally arrived in the group. One died accidentally in a swimming pool in mid-July. Twenty-three of the 58 students are from California and 18 from New York; the remainder are from nine other widely scattered states. Judging from the pictures in the Cuban press, the group is fairly evenly divided between Negroes and whites.

2. The group was originally organized in New York last October, according to one of the group's spokesmen. About 80 students were then involved in the group, which announced its intention of visiting Cuba over the Christmas holidays. The Cuban Federation of University Students offered at that time to pay the expenses of the visitors. A Cuban aircraft was sent to Canada to pick up the students, but the Canadian government, forewarned by US officials, refused permission for the flight. The group deferred further efforts to reach Cuba until this summer.

3. The students left New York in two groups on 25 June, flying to Amsterdam and Paris via KLM and BOAC. They flew from Paris to Prague on 27 June, remaining there until 29 June when they boarded a Cuban airlines flight which arrived in

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Havana on 30 June. Twice during their passage through Europe they were informed orally and in writing by US diplomatic officers that their proposed travel to Cuba was against Department of State regulations.

4. As to the motive for their travel to Cuba, they have repeatedly explained to Cuban news media that they came to learn the "truth" about Cuba, which they claim the US government and press is attempting to keep from the American people. Phillip Luce, one of their leaders and a recent graduate of Ohio State University, claimed that group members have decided to set up a permanent organization in New York City to organize more student trips to Cuba. It appears evident that the Castro regime hopes the group will become a nucleus in a number of US universities and other youth centers for pro-Castro propaganda and for promoting the idea of Cuban-US "coexistence"--on Cuban terms.

5. Nothing is known in OCI of the organization or group in the United States which did the behind-the-scenes organizational work in recruiting and sending off the student group. It could have been the Fair Play for Cuba Committee or another Castro front operating in the US.

6. The financing of the students' trip was, according to their own statements, largely provided by the Cuban government. Their official visit, however, was over on 27 July and, according to one of them, they have been spending their own money since then. This student said that the Cuban "Institute for Friendship with Peoples" had offered them pocket money when they found themselves stranded in Cuba after 27 July, but some of the students refused the offer since the Cubans "have been paying for everything...and need all the money they have."

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